

#### **INFO 285 Discussion 4: Research Study Proposal Question**

I am initially interested in studying the effective use of an academic library's physical space. I have heard of academic libraries moving their physical items to compact storage. My own academic library has a large set of physical items that takes up considerable space. I have heard employees at my library talk about how a large percentage of the physical collection hasn't been utilized in a long time. What would the impact be on an academic library if they moved a large majority of their physical collection to compact storage and freed up more space on each floor for other uses of the space?

To explore this line of questioning I could follow quantitative methods to assess the current inventory and its utilization over time including looking at patterns in library item checkouts and circulation statistics. One limitation to relying only on quantitative analysis for this question is that it doesn't help answer why but simply answers the "what" questions of the physical items used in the library.

I could also use qualitative methods like surveys or interviews to assess how students, faculty, and staff at the university use the physical items and the impact it may be on their study, work, and research to move items from the main floors to compact storage. One drawback to these methods are ensuring the surveys or interviews would reach broadly enough on campus and within the local community to give an accurate answer to the research question without biasing the results. How would surveys and interviews be conducted so it doesn't just focus on those that love the library the way it is or the way it has been?

It seems though that a mixed approach of using quantitative and qualitative approaches would help answer the research question the best. The answer to the research question would rely on quantitative usage and inventory data of the current items in the library as well as assessing

the qualitative use of items in the library. The numbers alone won't paint the full picture that could help a library make decisions about how to most effectively utilize the library's physical items and physical space.